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SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: ONE VIEW ON SADC ENGAGEMENT ON ZIMBABWE

REF: STATE 112727

Classified By: Charge d'affaires, a.i. Matt Harrington;  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Charge d'affaires delivered reftel demarche to Secretary to the Cabinet Franz Kapofi on October 23. Kapofi, a senior advisor to President Hifikepunye Pohamba, explained that he was not sure if Namibia would send a representative to the SADC Politics, Defense and Security Organ Troika Summit scheduled for October 27 in Harare. Kapofi noted that President Pohamba will almost certainly not attend as he has other commitments, and since the Harare meeting is not a summit of SADC heads of state. (Note: Kapofi is the Namibian government's lead negotiator for Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) program. He and the Charge discussed the status of the ratification of the MCA Compact. That conversation will be reported septel. End Note).

¶2. (C) Charge underscored the need for SADC engagement to restart the Zimbabwe power-sharing talks between Robert Mugabe and the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leader Morgan Tsvangirai. Charge stressed the need for an expeditious solution that reflects the will of the Zimbabwean people, noting the dire humanitarian crisis. He emphasized to Kapofi the need for SADC members to press Mugabe to cease unilateral actions that undermine the September 15 agreement and to work in good faith to fully implement the agreement.

¶3. (C) Kapofi responded that "President Mugabe is not just difficult for Mr. Tsvangirai, but difficult for the whole region." He noted that Mugabe is "shrewd" and has a "tremendous ego." Kapofi remarked that Tsvangirai needs to recognize Mugabe's ego and not fight over every ministry. He added that Tsvangirai should "take what he gets" to get his foot in the door and then work to erode Mugabe's power from the inside.

¶4. (C) Comment: Kapofi was frank about Mugabe's personal shortcomings and about the challenges he poses for the entire region. That said, Kapofi's views of Mugabe are not widely shared among ruling party officials. It does not appear Namibia has been asked to participate in the Harare meeting, and in any case, would be unlikely to bring pressure on the Zimbabwean President. End Comment.  
HARRINGTON